05/12/2014 ~~Of~~ the Cathedral – to Shlomo Gazit

- As the year 2015 is upon us – we are at the height of a multi-dimensional historical earthquake, one which hasn't been seen since the end of WWI and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

- In the Middle East – within 3 years the "Arab spring" has turned into the "Islamic winter" – borders have been wiped out and hundreds of years' worth of conflicts between tribes and factions have erupted onto the surface.

- A bi-polar and multi-polar world has been replaced by a world with not even one geo-political center of gravity. The world turned into a~~re is a~~ G~~g~~estalt in which everything is dependent~~d~~ on everything else, and every challenge requires global cooperation in order to deal with it.

- In sort ~~somewhat~~ of a "perfect storm", Israel finds itself as the only outpost of the western way of life in the Middle East – at the meeting point of the " clash of civilizations" between Islam and the West, as Huntington envisioned it, while at the same time being in the spinning "eye of the storm" of the clash of titans within Islam itself. Between Sunni and Shi'ite, between tradition, extremism and terrorism on the one hand, and modernity and moderation on the other. Between the dream of "past glory" and the vision of a "leap" into the future". And all of this is drenched in a lot of blood.

- For Israel t~~T~~his drama that has stormed~~washed~~ the Arab world carries with it two lessons and one insight:
  The 1st lesson: "Be modest in~~careful of false~~ prophecies~~ts~~". In particular when it comes to the future. Mubarak for example, had about 400,000 people at his disposal working in the various security agencies in order to preemptively predict events such as those that took place at "Tahrir" square. And he did not foresee it. So who can?

  The 2nd lesson: when we are being told by friends, and even by the leaders among us: "don't be drawn into a panic – if something really severe (Iran for example) happens – the US will not stand by. The world will take action!"

  And I say: don't bet on it. See Syria. Assad has massacred 200,000 of his own people – with tanks, artillery, fighter jets, even chemical weapons – and the world did not lift a finger.

  And one insight: To all our opponents and even friends who tell us that our lack of success in reaching an agreement with the Palestinians is the root of all the troubles in the middle east – the original sin! – I say: this is not true!
  Even if I in 2000 (or Rabin and Peres in 94' or Olmert in 2008) – were to reach a peace treaty with the Palestinians – which has already been implemented a long time ago – still – the "Muslim Brotherhood" would have taken control over Egypt and A~~e~~l-Sisi would have taken it back a short time after.

- Syria still would have been in the midst of a bitter civil war. And Iran – would have still strivinged for regional hegemony and nuclear military capability.
- The reasons for all the above are deeply rootedseeded in the history of the nations and the area – and do not stem from the Israeli Palestinian conflict (they are related to it perhaps in another way, which I will get to later on).

- In the new reality created byformed as a result of the "Arab spring" there is good news and bad news for us.
  lets start with the bad news:
  Isis, the disintegration of Syria, the events in Iraq – all of these areis is bad news that proves to us time and time again that the Middle East is indeed a trough neighborhood. There is no mercy for the weak, and there will be no second opportunity to those who don't know how to defendprotect themselves. Every year new threats arise. And the old ones: Hezbollah, Iran, terrorism –are all "alive and kicking" and growing even stronger.

  But there is also good news. Israel is the strongest country in the region, from Tripoli in Libya to Tehran. It's the strongest – militarily, strategically, economically and if we know how to act properly – also diplomatically. Equally important: Israel will continue to be the strongest country in the region in any foreseeable future – especially if we succeed in identifying and nurturing these sources of power and advantage – including:

    - An army capable of defeating any outside combination of threats including terrorism.
    - A strong and growing economy - in an open-symbiotic relationship with global markets.
    - Foreign policy that assures international backup, especially American – diplomatic and economic- backing for Israel's positions – and holds the "moral high ground" vis-a-visunlike our enemies and rivals.

- The fact that Israel is stronger than any combination of enemies – is what gives us the fulcrum to act from a position of strengthpower and self confidence in order to change the reality : to counterpush back the threats and to se-maximize the opportunities.

- A few words about each one of the threats:

2 ironies and one insight about Isis.

  Assad slaughtered 200,000 of his citizevilians including some with the use of chemical weapons – and that wasn't enough to get the British parliament and Prime Minister Cameron or the American congress and President Obama to act.

- Then,ISIS beheadedcut off the heads of two journalists (not really a new practice in the Middle East) in front of the cameras – and within 48 hours the world was united against them. Better late than never so we have no reason to complain

about the result. However, there is something to learn about the superficiality of the decision-making process in our world~~here~~.
Second: let's assume for a moment that ISIS is restrained in about a year (and hopefully – crushed) – who won?

- The main winner is Assad. W~~w~~hen the Coalition wipes out his main adversary and allows him to focus more intensively on the rest of the rebels – meaning the "moderate" rebels – which the Coalition purports to train and reinforce in order to take him down.
Iran also wins and of course Hezbollah - a~~A~~ll members of President Bush's Axis of Evil. In other words: the Coalition is doing some of the "dirty work" for them.

- In my best assesment~~estimate~~ the Turks are right in their position that there is no point in striking ISIS unless you also set a goal to take down Assad and act to achieve it.
The Turks are right in their call for a "humanitarian strip" – 25-30 km into Syrian territory along the borders and declaring it a "no fly zone" to allow refugees to assemble there and allow humanitarian action for treating them (there are several millions of them).

- What hasn't been said explicitly is that such a deployment might lead sooner or later to an engagement with the Air Force – followed by the Syrian aerial defense – and that could develop into an opportunity to fundamentally change the balance of power and the course of the war against Assad's regime.

  ISIS may not be as strong as it is being portrayed. One intense and coordinated action, particularly if performed according to the Turkish outline and with massive Turkish involvement – may just well be a Genie that's put back into the bottle during the next year or two. However – let us make no mistake – ISIS is part of the radical Islamic web of terrorism. A web that is loosely knit, yet survives on a strict diet of means – and reflects operational flexibility, survivability and a fanatic adherence to the goal.
- We're talking about ALQ, Jabhat al-Nusra in Syria, Lashkar-e-Taiba in India, the "Houthis" in Yemen, the "Shabaab" in Sumali, "Boko Haram" in Nigeria and many more – all across the Muslim strip from Marrakech to Bangladesh.
- And this web is very durable. Dealing with it is going to be a war that lasts for a generation and not a few years – the struggle must include collaboration not just between the moderate Arab nations and Turkey – but a long-standing collaboration between the US, Russia, China, India and Europe – everyone to some extent – are possible targets and victims of this terror. Creating this collaboration is much more important than the events in Ukraine or the Nor~~Sou~~th Chinese Sea Islands.

- Hezbollah is busy in Syria – and as a rule would prefer to avoid provoking Israel. There are some here who would say that Nasrallah is deterred, the memory of 2006 is still fresh in his mind and he will not act. I have my reservations from the deterministic nature of this statement. "Deterence~~ment~~" is a somewhat elusive

term. This is not a "zero sum game" on a one-dimensional bar. This is a complex and context-relatbased issue. Although the most common state is that each side has a fundamental position that applies to normal situations (let's assume for a moment that the position is "avoiding provoking Israel") – it is still not hard to imagine an event or damage to Hezbollah's (or Nasrallah's) assets or prestige which would lead it to action, despite its principal position, contrary to what's caused by their true fundamental position.

- Incidentally, this doesn't apply solely to "Hezbollah" – but also to us.
- Therefore, the working assumptionhypothesis and the operational deploymentestimations must include the possibility of deterioration for a wide-scale confrontation with Hezbollah.

- And now,from here to Iran – which under certain circumstances might be the element that ignitespushes or incites "Hezbollah" into action.
- Let us be clear – a nuclear Iran is a main threat for the entire world order, not just Israel. A nuclear Iran means the end of the age of nuclear non-proliferation regime– Saudi Arabia, within months, Turkey within a few years and Egypt mightas well will probably follow as well–and all will become nuclear.
- Every third graderate dictator will be able to ensure his survivability against the outside world by following the footsteps of Pakistan, North Korea and Iran.
- The "countdown" towards the troubling vision of Prof. Graham Allison of Harvard about nuclear weapons in the hands of terrorist bodies – this countdown, even if it takelasts for 15 years, will startbegin – therefore, blockstopping Iran from becoming a "threshold nuunclear statecountry" is crucial, and justifies any effort.

- Right now we're in a diplomatic pause at least until March 2015. It's hard to imagine a good agreement with the P5+1 and a bad agreement would be best left unsigned. The problem is that the Iranians have no real incentive to reach a "finaln agreement" that will keep them from becoming a nuclear power.
- As far as they're concerned-,at any given moment, an improved "interim agreement" is better (unless the P5+1 yieldfold into a bad agreement.)

- The Iranians are quite sophisticated. In their perception, the American government has changed its goal without admitting it, from "Iran will not have military nuclear capabilityies. Period." to "Iran will not have military nuclear capabilityies on during our watch term."
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This is of course a completely different thing. And this perception only reinforces Iran's stubbornness and the delayhindering tactics that they've adopted.

- Israel has a supreme interest in "keeping all the options on the table". However, today, mostly against the backdrop of the prolonging talks – Israel has an interest to maximize the understanding with the United States and try to convince it of the need for determination and perseverance. Of the advisability of putting

"sticks" next to the "carrots" – and of the importance of the complete disillusion in regard to the objectives~~of the goals~~ of the Ayatollahs regime.

- And from here, a sharp segue to the diplomatic challenges: from the light (for now) to the heavy.
- Israel is far from being a leaf in the wind. But in a world where there's not one geopolitical center of gravity – not the US, Russia, Europe or China – Israel is also not omnipotent.
- It is wrong to disregard what's happening in Europe. It will not be resolved by ruling that Europe is filled with anti-Semitism (even though there's quite a bit of truth to it).
- To the members of the Cabinet and the "Big Eight" I would say in regards to the BDS – as long as these voices are coming from Eritrea or Mauritania, we can live with that for years. When it comes from Scandinavia and the Britania~~UK~~ – that's a different story and must be taken seriously.
- Right now it is being espoused by parliaments, not governments. But it could expand – to trade unions, to the academia, to consumer organizations and NGOs. And then, heaven forbid, eventually to governments – which will say "we live amongst our people". We mustn't forget that Europe is Israel no. 1 trade partner - not the US and not China. And Europe – next to North America and a few countries in the East is at the heart of the "reference group" of liberal democratic countries – to which we want to belong, and rightfully so.

- This leads us to the US – which is a far greater diplomatic challenge. Israel is a sovereign state. On more than one occasion, I've told President Obama, and before that to Presidents Bush and Clinton, the following: "O~~i~~n issues that we believe~~feel~~ are essential to the security and future of Israel and of the Jewish people, Israel will make its~~the~~ decisions alone and on its own responsibility and act upon them~~according to them~~. We cannot, and will not want to", I added, "delegate~~relinquish~~ the responsibility for such~~these~~ decisions, ~~if and~~ when ~~they are~~ required, even to the best of our friends – which is you."
The US presidents, I note, were not always fond of this statement – but they respected it.
- In the same token~~manner~~ I told members of the cabinet more than once – "we must always remember that the US is also a sovereign state. And it expects us to respect its right to form its positions on the issues crucial to it based on its own interests ~~and responsibility.~~". And we have to respect that.

- And without derogating our responsibility to make and execute sovereign decisions – reality is~~the level of disillusion implies~~ that there isn't full symmetry here.
- The relations with the US President, the administration~~government, and~~ the C~~c~~ongress and the American people are vital to the State of Israel.

- The United States is Israel's main ally and strategic support. Our relations with it are the cornerstone of Israel's military capabilities, IDF's qualitative edy ~~advanta~~ge, and Israel's strategic and political positioning.
- We receive $3 billion a year from the US (for some 40 years now). Which social or economic budget items would we deprive of ₪12 billion in order to make up the gap – without this assistance?
- They're the only ones who can provide us with F-35 jets, the best aircrafts in the world.
- These are mutually beneficial relations. The US also benefits from the unprecedented cooperation between our intelligence services. But so do we. We never expected, and will never ask others to fight for us – and still – the US has deployed advanced~~unique~~ radars in Israel for early warning against~~against~~ long-range missiles, and is exercising~~preparing~~ on our soil and in the Mediteraenean an American response for assisting Israel in case it has to defend itself against missile attacks from Iran ~~on our soil and off our shores~~.
- We received about $1 billion from the US, by order of President Obama, for "Iron Dome" and the assistance for the David's Sling and Arrow programs continues.
- We turn to the US to veto hostile initiatives against Israel in the United Nations Security Council. Or soften the conclusions of the Goldstone Commission and others like it.
- We turned to them (and they responded the best they could) in rather tense times when a handful of our people were besieged in the embassy in Cairo – and at the door, an angry mob.
- Secretary of State Kerry, and President Obama – have gone to great lengths – while paying a considerable political (and often personal) price – to help us reach a breakthrough with the Palestinians. The effort was not successful. We also did not succeed (Rabin and Peres, myself, Olmert and Bibi as well). They shouldn't be ridiculed and debased for this. They should be appreciated. Even if we do not agree on all the details.
- We will still need their support while facing~~be called to help them with~~ many trials in the future.

- I recommend that we all remember this well. Do not stand idly by. Do not fold. Remember – yes. Uphold – almost at all costs – mutual trust and respect.
- This is good for Israel. The American Congress, President Obama, Biden and Kerry are part of the solution, even if it will take long time to see iti~~s delayed~~. They're not part of the problem.

- Ben Gurion used to say using~~with~~ his iron logic, ~~without interpretation,~~ that "the future of Israel depends on our strength and our righteousness."
  "Our strength" – is IDF's might and its strategic capabilities, ~~the power support,~~ the economic strength, and the people's unity.
  "Our righteousness" – not as an abstract concept – is ~~the grasp of~~our ~~the~~ capacity to conquer the"moral high ground" by means of a calculated effort to

act and be perceived as acting in good faith – to obtain peace, even if it is delayed.

- This is an essential condition for the world's support for Israel (or for the support of most of the world that's important to **us**).
- This is also an essential condition for achieving internal unity and willingness for sacrifice in a society where being called for battle or routinely risking your life is not a theoretical notion, but rather part of a life~~the~~ experience that keeps repeating itself.
- The ~~spirit of~~ fighting spirit, the ~~ability to~~ standing ability and the internal solidarity are all~~that's~~ deeply bound to both – our strength and our righteousness. Our righteousness is just as important as our strength.
  Our righteousness and not our strength in itself, is what gives the struggle of Zionism its meaning and sense of purpose~~point~~ (especially for ones who can choose)
- The backing of a Super Power (US)~~power support~~ and the resilience of our~~the~~ society and economy which are among the~~some of the~~ components of our "strength" – will not come without recognition of our righteousness. And they will erode if it's gone.

- This is the time to point out the danger in the weakening of the cohesive forces which hold the~~glue that keeps~~ Israeli society together. We're turning more and more into a divided society whose very fabric is about to be ripped apart, and is riddled with hatred for one another. Left and right. Jews and Arabs. Secular and religious. Rich and poor. Center and periphery. Old and new. This is dangerous. The Tunisian late President Bourguiba (and later on Sadat in his debates with Assad just~~moments~~ before the peace treaty with Israel) made the argument that there's no need to defeat Israel by force. Give them the opportunity – and they will collapse from within. But the opposite is true!
  We have no intention of collapsing from within. But this requires that we come to our senses and act with the right national priorities~~y~~ in mind in the social and economic fields.
- A high priority for the young generation, ~~of~~ the future. And to those groups of the society who carry its burdens:working hard, paying taxes and serving in the IDF.~~,~~ Nurturing~~next to~~ mutual respect, openness, tolerance, and acceptance of others.~~,~~ M~~is a m~~ore equitable distribution of the national wealth, equal opportunities for everyone, and encouraging individuals, groups and communities to take responsibility. All of these are part of our mission – and we have a long road ahead of us.

I am concerned about our ~~"urges~~addiction to internal quarrels~~"~~ just as much as I am concerned about our conflicts with external rivals~~"enemies"~~. Our "righteousness" will not prevail and our "strength" will crack over time if we do not act decisively~~spire~~ to establish, gradually yet persistently ~~and decisively~~, the norms of public life and civil society – which sets~~shape~~ the norm~~boundarie~~s of what is done and what isn't done far above and beyond the criminal threshold.~~'s appropriate and what's inappropriate~~. Improved public life norms has to be set

regarding the~~We must move away from the criminal norm and~~ respect for the rule of law, standards of~~and~~ governance, keeping~~protecting~~ the thin line between freedom of expression and freedom of incitement – and hitting the brakes on racism and Jewish terrorism – which in my opinion should be treated~~investigated deep~~ within the criminal domain.~~ world~~.

- This brings us to the new "nation-state law". This is a redundant and even harmful law. In general, and particularly at this point. To our friends it signals that Israel is losing its self confidence regarding the obvious – namely~~in other words,:~~ its unique identity as the Jewish-democratic state as reflected by the "Declaration of Independence".
  To our enemies it ~~shows that we're single-handedly~~ provides~~ing~~ an effective tool to make Israel suspected~~icious~~ – as a country that's knowingly drifting away from the norms of democracy – as a preliminary step towards institutionalized discrimination.
  And one has to wonder: what was wrong with what we had until this point? What's wrong with the "Declaration of Independence"? Who needs this? And why?

- Churchill once observed~~diagnosed~~ the difference between an optimist and pessimist.
  The pessimist – sees the difficultly in every opportunity
  The optimist – sees the opportunity in every difficultly.
- We have opportunities before us within all of the difficulties. The most important of all, the rare one, of the kind that comes once in a generation – is the opportunity to establish a regional agreement – its existence is more prominent in light of the "Arab Spring" and after "Operation Protective Edge".
  The opportunity exists to establish a regional agreement that will fundamentally change the ~~map of~~ reality map of the region and Israel's future and position~~ing~~ in it. An agreement that will move~~march~~ the region's entire economy forward together with~~forward and~~ the chance for stability and peace ,based on synergies and collaborations rather than hatreds and revenges.

- What does this refer to? The events of the past few years have created a strong common~~mutual~~ interest for Israel and the moderate Arab countries – Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States, Jordan, Egypt and perhaps even Turkey (which is not Arab). The focal interest – the struggle against radical Islamic terrorism and against Iran's hegemonic and nuclear intentions.
- The challenge for us is that there seems to be only one way to achieve that, t~~–~~ ~~T~~he upcoming elections in Israel require that we put it on hold for a few months.~~:~~
- And the way to do it is this: a strong, self-confident Israel, which is willing to launch serious negotiations with the Palestinians and the group of Arab nations within~~under~~ an international conference backed by~~with the support of~~ the US and the Quartet – in order to achieve a two-state solution and~~next to~~ establish~~ing~~ a regional agreement. All this while maintaining a firm and persistent fight against terrorism and ensuring IDF's qualitative military ed~~y advanta~~ge over

any combination of opponents.

- The most moderate of Arab rulers are unable (and also unwilling) to float this commonmutual interest and turn it into policy – because they're worried about how their people would respond. This is the wayroad in which the Palestinian issue is relatedbound to possibility of anthe chances for an overall agreement in the Middle East.
- And this isn't just ana mere assessment.

- We must remember, vis-a-viswith the Palestinian, Israel -mostly (and practically only) has something to give. With the rest of the moderate Arab world – Israel has a lot to getreceive.
  Not just recognition and legitimacy,.but also an opportunity for regional infrastructure projects – and mostly – for the beginning of a process, long as it may be – to change the regional's fundamental attitudepositions towards Israel.

- On the road to seize this opportunity – Israel will have to consider embracing the Saudi proposal alongside Israel's reservation – as a basisthe foundation for negotiation ofthe debate over a regional agreement.
- This is going to take time. There are going to be ups and downs. The Palestinians are not an easy interlocutor. No one knows better than I do.I should know.
- This might require long periods of interim agreements and even calculated unilateral steps that are coordinated with the US and the Qquartet.
- It is possible that within the context of a regional agreement, the Palestinian State, oncewhen established, could be integrated into a the constructuction of a tighter cooperation that could include Jordan, Israel and perhaps another regional player.
- But in order to promote the chance of a regional agreement after the elections in Israel – the Palestinian issue and the two-state solution – have to be at the top of the agenda.
- The idea that's brought up from time to time by the radical right – to continue to rule the entire territory and maintain a sort of "autonomy" for the Palestinians – is an illusion at best, and the first step of an upcoming blame game – at worst. It will be brutally rejected by our closest friends – not to mention by each of the potential partners for the regional agreement – and by all of them together. This is also not a mere assessment.

- The claim that the events of the past year "prove" that Israel's vital security needs are incompatiblecannot be integrated with the "two-state solution" – is false. And I'm stating this as a professional position, not a political opinion.
- On the contrary – the IDF will be able to defend Israel better from an internationally recognized border that includes the Settlement blocs, a number of strategic sites on the back of the mountains ridge, a security zone east of Ben

Gurion Airport and long-term military presence on the Jordan River.

- The real threat to the future of the Zionist Projectenterprise – is not the security constraintsrestrictions of the "two-state solution" but rather the slippery slope – which will lead us to the "one-state solution" – a reality that will compromise Israel's security and increase its diplomatic isolation – while necessarily (and this is the keyword) leading Israel into becoming a non-Jewish or non-democratic state. Not to mention the danger of delving into deep, generations longongoing hemorrhaging between generations of two unseperable national communities,- which will become inseparable – like we've seen in Belfast and Bosnia.

- The vision we all share – the vision of a "model society" in Israel, ofis put getting Israel to the front row of the world's most advanced countries within 10-15 years into the group of cutting edge societies – in education and culture, science and technology, quality of lifeving – and eventually standard of living (Finland and Denmark can do it? So can we!). A society where its sons and daughters choose to live in it. And one that young Jews from all over the world consider a source of pride, inspiration – and even a worthy place to live in.

- The vision of a "model society" will not materializehappen unless we gather our mental strength and political willaspirations, despite the pain and the differences in our positions – and together embrace the "two-state solution under a regional agreement" – which even if it is delayed – is the only appropriate and feasible solution, the onlyin the complex world of the 21st century – Zionism's realistic and proper goal in this complex world of the 21st century.-

- A friend (from the Likud, actually) told me that when he was young he visited Ben Gurion's home a few times. In one of their conversations, the boy asked the Old Man: "how is it that out of all of the people's leaders in the past 2,000 years, and even in the past 80 years, it was you who ended up founding the Jewish State?" And the Old Man answered: "in ancient times everyone had a sixth sense, a sense of recognizing opportunities. This sense has disappeared over time – for most people. But not for me! I saw an opportunity – and I seized it."
Ben Gurion did not speak of the horrors of the War of Independence, the doubts, the risks. Everyone assumed he would fail. He talked about the opportunity and recognizing it. And the deed.

- Like Ben Gurion at the time, Menachem Begin – with Egypt, and Rabin – in the peace treaty with Jordan, and later Peres – with the first steps towards the Palestinians – took huge massive national, diplomatic, security and political risks. Some of them also paid a heavy price. Yitzhak – paid the ultimate price. But they all dared – and acted. This is the true test of leadership. This is also the realbig test of creative stetesmanshipdiplomacy.
- FormativeShaping leadership had always beenforever shall be rooted in rare combination and fine balance – between vision, daring and ,courage on one hand, and judgment, complete sobriety and grasp ofunderstanding of the details

on the other. They will not come where anxiety, pessimism and passivity~~veness~~ rule – these are recipes for the creating of self-fulfilling (necessarily pessimistic) prophecies.

- The essence and the purpose ~~of the existence~~ of the Zionist movement was defying the~~are defining~~ reality and the mindset~~"state of mind"~~ that the Galuth~~Diaspora~~ created. Their foundation lies in the decision to take ~~charge of~~ our own fate in our hands and move~~act~~ proactively to change reality. And not be swept by the arbitrary waves of history.

- Reality ~~iy i~~s knocking on our door. Not everything is certain. Nothing is ever certain. And nothing ever will be. Nevertheless – open the door – this is the ~~goal and the~~ true trial of the national leadership.
- Abba Eben used to say – the Palestinians have never missed an~~y~~ opportunity to miss an opportunity.
- Let's not fall into this trap – ourselves.

- Thank you.